



Central Intelligence Agency
Office of the Deputy Director for Intelligence

DDI- 02881/84/1

15 MAY
1984

NOTE FOR: DCI

Attached for your signature is a proposed response to a recent letter from Ambassador Lodge commenting on the extent of Soviet influence on Syrian actions and policy.


Robert M. Gates

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निकट पूर्व/दक्षिण एशिया विश्लेषण कार्यालय
ادارة التحليل لشؤون الشرق الاوسط و جنوب آسيا
המחלקה לענייני המזרח התיכון ודרום אסיה
اداره تجزيه و تحليل خاور ميانه و جنوب آسيا
Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis
Directorate of Intelligence

DDI- 02881/84/a

14 May 1984

NOTE FOR: DDI

In a recent letter to the DCI,
Ambassador Lodge raised some questions
about the Soviet-Syrian relationship
after reading a piece by Brian McCauley.

NESA has prepared a draft reply to
Ambassador Lodge for Mr. Casey's signature.
The reply, I am assured, was coordinated
with SOVA.



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Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

DDI-02881/84

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17 MAY 1984

The Honorable John Davis Lodge
American Ambassador
Bern, Switzerland

Dear John:

In response to your comments on the [redacted]
[redacted] Intelligence Memorandum, we believe that as a
client state Syria exercises a significant degree of
independence from its Soviet patron, just as our
friends in the region do. [redacted]

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The Soviet supply of arms to Syria does not
translate into control over President Assad's foreign
policy. Assad realizes that the Soviets have few
friends in the region and believes that they need him
as much as he needs them. Although Soviet concerns do
influence Syrian thinking in some instances, Damascus
pursues its major foreign policy goals independently,
confident that the flow of arms from the Soviet Union
will continue despite independent Syrian actions. [redacted]

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Assad frequently has demonstrated his willingness
to act against Moscow's wishes when he thinks funda-
mental Syrian interests are at stake. The Syrians
intervened in Lebanon in 1976, sent troops to the
Jordanian border in 1980, and introduced SA-6 missiles
into the Bekaa Valley in 1981 either over Soviet
objections or without consulting the Soviets. Moscow,
in our view, is sometimes reluctant to challenge Syrian
policy for fear of antagonizing Damascus. The Soviets,
for example, almost certainly opposed the Syrian move
against PLO leader Arafat last year, but did not make a
concerted effort to rein in the Syrians. [redacted]

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In many cases, of course, Syrian and Soviet interests coincide. Assad shares with the Soviets the fundamental goal of weakening US influence in the region. Both sought to impede US attempts to broker a settlement between the Lebanese factions and are determined to prevent Jordan's King Hussein from entering US-sponsored negotiations with Israel. Both continue to oppose the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon and hope to force the Israelis to withdraw. Syrian and Soviet policy in these areas may be nearly identical, and we can expect cooperation between them in the future. Nonetheless, Assad has proven himself quite prepared to ignore Soviet advice when he disagrees with it.

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Yours,

/s/ Bill

William J. Casey
Director of Central Intelligence

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